

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Luxenberg, and Members of the Housing Committee,

My name is Rev. Kari Nicewander, and I live in West Hartford. I am an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, and I'm testifying in support of Fair Share Legislation, House Bill 6633. This bill will make our state a more inclusive place to live and contribute to economic growth.

In 2014, I was moving from Zambia to the Hartford area, and I wanted to find a good school for my two kids. We had lived in Africa for three years, so their early schooling was entirely in Zambia, at a school with students from all over the world. I wanted my children to attend a diverse school in Connecticut, where they would get a good education, and study in an environment with other students who looked like them. One of my sons is black, the other is white. I wanted them to go to a school with a healthy academic and social environment.

Every time I looked at school information, I found one thing to be true. The communities these more diverse schools were in were also the most impoverished, and their schools suffered as a result. Because of their lack of resources, these schools had lower rankings, teacher ratings, and test scores than schools in more affluent areas. Connecticut's segregation and lack of affordable housing across the state creates this situation, and disproportionately harms people of color, like my son.

I was moving, half way around the world, from Zambia to Connecticut, and I could not get my children into a single school with a high percentage of children of color, that was not under resourced. This should not be our reality, but housing segregation perpetuates this inequity.

We should not live in a state where the higher percentage the students of color the lower the school ranking. We should not live in a state where poverty concentration undermines educational opportunities. We should not live in a state where school systems are overburdened and under resourced. We should not live in a state where kids of color are left behind, because of a lack of housing choice and poverty concentration. Our children deserve better.

Our economy also deserves better. As a single mother raising her children in this state, I want my kids to be able to stay here after they graduate. I want them to be able to afford to live here. I want them to have jobs that can cover the cost of housing. But there is a staggering lack of affordable housing. Can my kids stay here after they finish college? We know that our state struggles to retain our youth, in large part due to the lack of affordable housing, which leaves jobs unfilled.

Fair Share legislation addresses two crises that Connecticut is facing: First of all, the reality of extreme segregation in housing, which creates educational inequity. Secondly, the reality of our housing crisis and its economic impact. Fair Share legislation will create 135,000 units of sorely needed affordable housing over 10 years, 63,000-79,000 jobs, \$9.8-12.2 Billion in state and local tax revenue, and \$47-59 Billion in income for residents. It will also create a system where lower income families have a choice in where they live, dismantling generations of segregation.

Thank you for your time and I ask that you support HB 6633, to create a more just, equitable Connecticut, and to improve our state's economy.

Sincerely,
Rev. Kari Nicewander
12 Court Park
West Hartford, CT 06119